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Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum**

Contents

Page

II. Replies received from Governments

Bangladesh 2

France (on behalf of the European Union) 2

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.
** This information was received after the submission of the main report.

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Bangladesh

[Original: English]
[25 August 2008]

An arms race in outer space would endanger international peace and security. Bangladesh does not support outer space weaponization and emphasizes that prevention of an arms race in outer space, including a ban on the deployment or use of weapons therein is instrumental in avoiding threats to peace and security. There is a common interest of mankind in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. As such, cooperative measures among Member States in outer space activities should be ensured. Member States having significant outer space activities should extend security assurances to those who do not have outer space programmes. A mechanism should be put in place allowing Member States to derive benefits from the peaceful use of outer space activities through existing and future outer space programmes.

France (on behalf of the European Union)

[Original: French]
[15 September 2008]

Proposals by the European Union on international transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation and the prevention of an arms race in outer space

Introductory note

1. Activities in outer space are assuming increasing importance in the economic and industrial development of nations, as well as in their security. The European Union is committed to ensuring that peaceful activities for the benefit of all may be undertaken in the space environment.

2. The European Union fully shares the goals set forth in General Assembly resolution 62/43, and is of the view that creating a climate of peace and security is essential for pursuing the exploration and peaceful use of outer space as well as for international cooperation and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. As it has previously made clear, the European Union considers that pragmatic and concrete transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities acceptable to the greatest number of countries will yield substantial dividends for the security of such activities and will contribute to the achievement of the above-mentioned goals.

3. The European Union attaches great importance to the relevant existing treaties on outer space activities and sees them as a foundation upon which to build. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1968 Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the 1972 Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects, the 1975 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, the Hague Code of Conduct, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, together with the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space,

already provide a range of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

4. The European Union voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 62/43, as it had for resolution 61/75, to which it provided a reply on 18 September 2007 (see document A/62/114/Add.1). The broad support garnered by resolution 62/43 confirmed the importance of establishing a regime encompassing transparency and confidence-building measures based, inter alia, on the following principles:

- Freedom for all to use outer space for peaceful purposes;
- Preservation of the security and integrity of space objects in orbit; and
- Due consideration for the legitimate security and defence interests of States.

5. The European Union recognizes the work initiated by the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Gerard Brachet, aimed at guaranteeing the long-term viability of outer space activities. The European Union supports this initiative. Member States participating in outer space activities attended the meeting of an informal working group organized by France on 7 and 8 February 2008. The continued involvement of numerous countries as well as commercial operators and relevant international organizations reflects the interest in and importance that States and others involved in space activities attach to the search for concrete measures to strengthen the security of outer space activities. The positive outcome of that meeting also showed that international cooperation based on the exchange of information and data is one of the best ways of attaining that goal. The European Union member States concerned are ready to take part in the work of this informal group in order to contribute to the adoption of specific legal provisions and best transparency and confidence-building practices. This initiative is fully consistent with and complementary to the European Union plan for a code of conduct on space activities as envisaged in the joint European Union reply to resolution 61/75.

Towards a code of conduct on space activities

6. Following the joint reply to resolution 61/75, in which the European Union expressed its desire to propose a code of conduct on space objects and space activities that would be consistent with the provisions of that resolution, the 27 member States of the European Union developed, at the expert level, a draft code of conduct on space activities.

7. The draft code seeks to establish the fundamental rules for States conducting space activities and is aimed at reducing the risk of collision and creation of space debris, as well as at strengthening mutual understanding among nations and others involved in space activities. It elaborates on the main principles and general goals expressed by the European Union in its joint reply, including:

- Progress towards adherence to and implementation of relevant regimes governing activities in space;
- Development of a best practices guide for strengthening the security of operations in space;
- Measures to strengthen understanding and confidence-building among nations and others involved in space activities and to organize communications among

those involved in space activities with a view to preventing accidents and collisions between space objects; and

– Emphasis on the voluntary nature of such a code.

8. In order for such a code of conduct to have substantive scope, strengthen the security of space activities and create a climate of confidence that could help prevent an arms race in outer space, it must be acceptable to and observed by the greatest number of countries. The European Union therefore wishes to propose this draft code as its own contribution to the elaboration of a code of conduct on space activities that allows safe access to space for all, and is willing to engage in consultations with spacefaring nations with a view to producing a text that is acceptable to the greatest number of countries and to presenting it at the relevant international forums on space activities.

9. At the end of this process, which the European Union proposes to initiate shortly, we hope to complete the elaboration of a code of conduct that is open for accession by all States on a voluntary basis.